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ATTN. SPENCER  
ABRAHAM,  
Sec. of Energy

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To: YMP]SR@ymp.gov

Subject: An imperfect industry is being asked to perform an impossible task...

Cc: president@whitehouse.gov, graydavis@governor.ca.gov, "Barbara Boxer, Senator (CA, D)"  
<senator@boxer.senate.gov>To: Carol Hanlon, U.S. Department of Energy, Yucca Mountain Site Characterization Office  
(M/S #025), P.O. Box 30307, North Las Vegas, NV, 89036-0307 (fax: 800-967-0739)

From: Russell Hoffman (full-address appears below)

Re: Possible Site Recommendation for Yucca Mountain -- public comments (aka: An imperfect industry is being asked to perform an impossible task...)

Date: September 3rd, 2001

Dear Ms Hanlon:

Every day, every operating nuclear power plant in America produces about 250 pounds of High Level Radioactive Waste, and about 1000 pounds of so-called Low Level Radioactive Waste, which is just High Level Radioactive Waste with filler added, like copper, aluminum, steel, bronze, diamond, rubber, cloth, cement, water, etc. etc..

I'm tired of hearing that the United States Government will take care of the waste from the commercial nuclear power plants. That waste is being generated by "for profit" companies. That waste is absolutely, totally -- and fairly -- their responsibility. Yet they pay fractions of a penny on the dollar to rid themselves of that waste, dumping it on society to handle, who in turn, have entrusted the Department of Energy, who in turn, have promoted a pig in a poke.

If Yucca Mountain fails to open for any reason, every nuclear power plant will need to refigure the financial costs of what they are going to do with their radioactive waste. Whatever that solution turns out to be (noting that all inexpensive solutions have already been rejected ahead of Yucca Mountain), it will surely cost billions and billions of dollars. That alone will probably be what finally breaks the back of the nuclear industry, if an accident doesn't come along first. I'm sure the nuclear power industry would be bankrupted if they suddenly had to start from -- pardon the expression -- ground zero regarding what they will do with radioactive waste.

It's time for the nuclear power companies to start calculating their net worth based on Yucca Mountain NEVER opening, and instead, use the fair assumption that there is NO SOLUTION to the problem of what to do with the nuclear waste they have been producing. That would be standard accounting practice. Instead they are banking on a hollow promise, and their accounting firms should put a stop to this charade, or those accountants should be put in jail for fraud. A great hoax is being perpetrated upon the shareholders of nuclear energy companies, and upon the public. The DOE is at the root of that hoax, but all the perpetrators are guilty.

My local nuclear power facility, San Onofre Nuclear (Waste) Generating Station (known as SONGS because the Waste (W) is ignored by nearly everyone) has thousands of tons of high level radioactive waste stored on site, waiting for a place to move it -- the result of several decades of risky operation. The three spent fuel pools at the site are all nearly filled to capacity. Plans are underway to start Dry Cask Storage at SON(W)GS soon, using NUHOMS casks. This is terribly hazardous. If the citizens understood that those casks are just going to sit there, for a hundred years or more, and

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that sooner or later they will have to be opened and their contents moved, the citizens would be up in arms. And may God help us all when they finally move those Dry Casks to some "permanent storage", and may God help whoever does it to have a steady hand, and good working equipment, and good training, and lots of good luck, and everything else perfect, because Lord knows, the nuclear industry drops stuff all the time. This year SON(W)GS dropped an 80,000 lb load, which resulted in millions of dollars being spent on upgrades to rigging equipment, better training, etc. — money which should have been spent in the first place so they didn't drop stuff to begin with. The nuclear power industry is an imperfect industry which is being asked to perform an impossible task.

Instead of facing the fact that there is no solution to the nuclear waste problem, and therefore, we had better stop making more waste every day, SON(W)GS and all the other U.S. nuclear power companies have avoided the issue entirely, which is absurd — it is an issue they must face. But because DOE has promised them Yucca Mountain, the nuclear industry won't face the truth about their waste problem. And yet it's clear to reasonable human beings who have studied the matter, that Yucca Mountain hasn't got a snowball's chance in a reactor vessel of happening and nor should it ever happen because it's a crazy, unworkable proposal. Therefore DOE's promises to the nuclear industry are utterly hollow. So it's high time to end that line of discussion and declare the truth for all to hear — which is that the United States Government has NO IDEA of what to do with nuclear waste. And nor does anyone else. We have created a monster. A Pandora's Box. It is H. G. Well's "Quap". It is the "Demon Hot Atom". It is promoted by the "Nuclear Mafia", a Mafia which has killed, and is killing, more people than any organized or disorganized group in history. Hitler would be proud of the scale of genocide accomplished by the DOE, let alone of the propaganda campaigns DOE has waged to accomplish that genocide. Hitler would be particularly pleased, no doubt, that the DOE has gotten away with this murder thus far unpunished. Thus far.

We do not have a good solution for what to do with the Low Level Radioactive Waste. And we have even less of a clue as to what to do with the High Level Radioactive Waste. Yucca Mountain is not a solution. And there are many, many people who know this, and who are doing and will do everything they can to prevent it from ever opening. So let's get real.

After a fair debate, the American public will surely shut down every nuke, and choose renewable energy resources. It's time for that debate. The public needs only to understand the truth about nuclear waste to decide against nuclear power. But dreams and schemes for Yucca Mountain and other fantasies continually delude the public. These hearings are a sham. Three hearings, on sudden notice, for a hundred billion dollar charade which is designed to hoodwink the country and allow the transport of nuclear waste through at least 40 states and past about 70% of the population? Just three short hearings, and DOE can't even get the address straight when they publish the announcement of those hearings? If you can't even get that right, why should we think you'll be able to get the nuclear waste to its proper address later? Well, we don't think you can. And we think you'll lie about it to convince the public otherwise.

Another point: I'm tired of hearing pro-nuclear supporters claim that the only thing stopping Yucca Mountain is that Nevada's citizens have a NIMBY attitude towards it. Nevada already carries a terrible burden from America's nuclear nightmare. Numerous irradiated sites already exist in the state, such as Beatty, Nevada, and of course the atomic testing ground within which Yucca Mountain sits. Should Nevada be asked to carry a far greater burden for America's nuclear stupidity? Haven't they done enough?

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However, NIMBY isn't the problem. The citizens of Nevada overwhelmingly oppose Yucca Mountain because no science has been presented which those citizens can take comfort in. DOE scientists cannot provide any reasonable assurances regarding nuclear transport safety issues (the recent train fire in a Baltimore tunnel really woke people up), or regarding the long-term geological stability of the Yucca Mountain site, or for that matter, the ability of ANY containment system ever devised by humans to survive thousands of years of radioactive bombardment and other naturally occurring destructive phenomena.

In actuality, it's now pretty clear that regardless of the reason -- opposition to the transportation of the waste, scientifically considered complaints about the actual method of storage, or some other reason -- Yucca Mountain is actually extremely unlikely to ever take in a single milligram of High Level Radioactive Waste. I know it should never be built. Most of the citizens of Nevada know it should never be built. I think just about everyone except the DOE, the nuclear industry, and some shrubbery back in Washington, knows it should never be built.

Yucca Mountain is a pipe dream, a hoax -- a fantasy -- which is being continued solely for the purpose of keeping the industry's hopes alive for as long as possible. The nuclear industry doesn't properly account for the cost of the waste, so therefore they aren't properly accounting for their total costs -- they're not even close.

Every day we wait, the problem grows by another dozen tons or more, across the country. It will all have to be transported to Nevada -- as well as a half-century backlog of existing high level radioactive waste. That's millions of pounds of waste, scattered at hundreds of sites around the country. Nevada will be the Grand Central Station of nuclear waste -- except none of the cargo will ever leave. There will be thousands of individual trips -- millions of chances for things to go wrong. Anyone who has any faith in those who promote Yucca Mountain is a fool.

It's time to shut down the nukes and turn to renewable energy resources -- indeed, we should have done that in the first place, and then we wouldn't be facing this problem at all. Were it not for heavy-handed decisions by the DOE's predecessor, the Atomic Energy Commission, we would now be using renewable energy across the country, and nuclear energy would be something we read about in textbooks, along with other horrors like the Black Death, the Inquisition, and the Holocaust.

Sincerely,  
  
Russell Hoffman  
Concerned Citizen  
P.O. Box 1936  
Carlsbad, CA 92018

Attachments (4):

- 1) Several URLs with additional information written by this author.
- 2) A list of some people this document was sent to. All recipients are encouraged to reprint it and distributed it.
- 3) Additional commentary on Yucca Mountain by Jack Shannon, USMC (ret.).

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4) Op-Ed piece in today's Boston Globe by Dr. Helen Caldicott: Nuclear Power isn't clean it's dangerous.

Renewable energy solutions:

<http://www.animatedsoftware.com/geni/rh2000ge.htm>

Shut San Onofre Down:

<http://www.animatedsoftware.com/enviromn/onofre/index.htm>

This letter is also being sent to:

President George Bush <president@whitehouse.gov>

Spencer Abraham, Secretary of Energy (fax: 202-586-4403)

Governor Gray Davis (California) <graydavis@governor.ca.gov>

Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) <senator@boxer.senate.gov>

Lake Barrett, Acting Director, Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20585 (via fax: 202-586-2672)

Below is a copy of a letter written by Jack Shannon:

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September 2, 2001

The Honorable Spencer Abraham

Secretary of Energy

U.S. Department of Energy

1000 Independence Ave SW

Washington, D.C. 20585

202-586-4403 [F]

Dear Secretary Abraham:

I object to the lack of proper, reasonable notice and opportunity for hearing on the DOE's site recommendation of Yucca Mountain for a national high-level nuclear waste repository. On August 21, 2001, with less than 30 days for any interested person to read the DOE's more than 370 page long technical report, "Yucca Mountain Preliminary Site Suitability Evaluation," your agency announced it was holding public hearings on the site recommendation of Yucca Mountain in Nevada between September 5th and 13th. Not only are these hearings provided with totally inadequate notice, but, for persons who will be affected by the requisite transportation of high-level nuclear waste through their hometowns via rail and road, your agency has provided no opportunity to comment on the suitability of the recommendation. A few meetings in Nevada does not come close to providing an opportunity for public hearing on a project of this magnitude and immense potential danger to those on transportation routes throughout the county. In addition, it is plain that the notice you provided was defective not only for being absurdly short notice, but for providing notice to meet at a place, canceling that site, then providing another site with an incorrect address. Moreover, your agency provided that final notice

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of the meeting at the wrong address on August 31st, the beginning of the long Labor Day weekend less than five days to the meeting including the intervening weekend and holiday.

Finally, it is plain from the notices your agency published in the Federal Register on August 21, 27 and 31, that the public is not clearly placed on notice that these are public hearings on your agency's decision to recommend Yucca Mountain as the site for a national high-level nuclear waste repository. Persons reading the notice are given the impression that these are merely hearings on the preliminary site suitability evaluation. Even then, your provision of less than thirty days notice from the availability of the 370 page evaluation and the few hearings in Nevada make it impossible for ordinary citizens to have any meaningful participation in such meetings. The notice was absurdly short even to arrange one's schedule to attend, too far away from most persons who are interested due to being on the high-level nuclear waste transportation routes, too little time to acquire and assimilate the substance of the 370-plus page evaluation of the site, and completely defective due to the errors mentioned above.

There is no doubt that, no matter what provisions may be in the Nuclear Waste Policy Act, the United States Constitution's Fifth Amendment protections require that persons such as ourselves—and affected Nevadans—must have at least reasonable notice and an opportunity to be heard on a decision such as this one, a decision with vast repercussions and grave potential dangers. Your agency's actions in this regard have not come even close to meeting the most minimal constitutional protections of citizens' rights to due process in this instance. We are certain you have violated our rights and those of the citizens of Nevada.

We call on you to reschedule these hearings with adequate notice and a meaningful opportunity to be heard by all persons who will be affected by your agency's recommendation of Yucca Mountain as the national high-level waste repository.

Sincerely,

John P. Shannon  
Nuclear Physicist/Nuclear Engineer  
Former Naval Reactor Scientist

Note: The DOE cannot be trusted to work with Nuclear Weapons Material

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Any more. They have given up their moral right because of the insipid corruption within the DOE.

cc:

Lake Barrett, Acting Director  
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management  
U.S. Department of Energy  
1000 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20585  
FAX: 202-586-2672

Carol Hanlon

U.S. Department of Energy  
Yucca Mountain Site Characterization  
Office (M/S #025)  
P. O. Box 30307  
North Las Vegas, NV 89036-0307  
FAX: 800-967-0739

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(end of letter by Jack Shannon)

(Below is an OP-ED by Dr. Helen Caldicott, which was published in the Boston Globe today):

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Nuclear power isn't 'clean'; it's dangerous  
By Helen Caldicott, 9/3/2001

AMONG THE many departures from the truth by opponents of the Kyoto protocol, one of the most invidious is that nuclear power is "clean" and, therefore, the answer to global warming.

We heard this during the last round of talks in Bonn, and we can expect to hear more of the same as we move closer to the next round of Kyoto talks that are coming up in Marrakesh in October and November.

However, the cleanliness of nuclear power is nonsense. Not only does it contaminate the planet with long-lived radioactive waste, it significantly contributes to global warming.

While it is claimed that there is little or no fossil fuel used in producing nuclear power, the reality is that enormous quantities of fossil fuel are used to mine, mill and enrich the uranium needed to fuel a nuclear power plant, as well as to construct the enormous concrete reactor itself.

Indeed, a nuclear power plant must operate for 18 years before producing one net calorie of energy. (During the 1970s the United States deployed seven 1,000-megawatt coal-fired plants to enrich its uranium, and it is still using coal to enrich much of the world's uranium.) So, to recoup the equivalent of the amount of fossil fuel used in preparation and construction before the first switch is thrown to initiate nuclear fission, the plant must operate for almost two decades.

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But that is not the end of fossil fuel use because disassembling nuclear plants at the end of their 30- to 40-year operating life will require yet more vast quantities of energy. Taking apart, piece by radioactive piece, a nuclear reactor and its surrounding infrastructure is a massive operation. Imagine, for example, the amount of petrol, diesel, and electricity that would be used if the Sydney Opera House were to be dismantled. That's the scale we're talking about.

And that is not the end of fossil use because much will also be required for the final transport and longterm storage of nuclear waste generated by every reactor.

From a medical perspective, nuclear waste threatens global health. The toxicity of many elements in this radioactive mess is long-lived.

Strontium 90, for example, is tasteless, odorless, and invisible and remains radioactive for 600 years. Concentrating in the food chain, it emulates the mineral calcium. Contaminated milk enters the body, where strontium 90 concentrates in bones and lactating breasts later to cause bone cancer, leukemia, and breast cancer. Babies and children are 10 to 20 times more susceptible to the carcinogenic effects of radiation than adults.

Plutonium, the most significant element in nuclear waste, is so carcinogenic that hypothetically half a kilo evenly distributed could cause cancer in everyone on Earth.

Lasting for half a million years, it enters the body through the lungs where it is known to cause cancer. It mimics iron in the body, migrating to bones, where it can induce bone cancer or leukemia, and to the liver, where it can cause primary liver cancer. It crosses the placenta into the embryo and, like the drug thalidomide, causes gross birth deformities.

Finally, plutonium has a predilection for the testicles, where it induces genetic mutations in the sperm of humans and other animals that are passed on from generation to generation.

Significantly, five kilos of plutonium is fuel for a nuclear weapon. Thus far, nuclear power has generated about 1,139 tons of plutonium.

So, nuclear power adds to global warming, increases the burden of radioactive materials in the ecosphere and threatens to contribute to nuclear proliferation. No doubt the Australian government is keen to assist the uranium industry, but the immorality of its position is unforgivable.

Dr. Helen Caldicott is founding president of Physicians for Social Responsibility. This column originally appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald. This story ran on page 13 of the Boston Globe on 9/3/2001. © Copyright 2001 Globe Newspaper Company.

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(End of article by Dr. Helen Caldicott)

Name, address, and affiliation of Russell D. Hoffman follows:  
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September 3, 2001

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